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OCI No. 1617/64

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
6 August 1964

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Foreign Reaction to the Crisis in Vietnam

Reports of initial foreign reaction to the US air strikes against North Vietnam are still limited from many areas of the world. The following is a roundup of information available as of 0730 EDT, 6 August.

Communist China: Chinese Communist propaganda reaction to the US strike has so far seemed calculated to deter the US from any further military action against Hanoi. Peiping's first direct commentary on the crisis came after a delay of three days in a government statement and People's Daily editorial of 6 August. The editorial repeated earlier assertions that the Chinese would "not sit idly by" and stated flatly that "aggression by the US against the DRV means aggression against China."

Peiping promised support if the US should "at any moment" invade North Vietnam, and declared that in such a situation the Chinese people could not fail to "rescue" the DRV. No specific threats of retaliation at this time were made, however.

The Chinese commentary continued Peiping's campaign to generate international political pressure against US military "intervention" in Southeast Asia. It portrayed the DRV attack on US naval vessels on 2 August as purely defensive, and categorically denied that a subsequent attack took place.

North Vietnam: Hanoi has reported the US air attack to its people in an official government statement and a military communiqué, but has avoided

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indications that the damage was substantial. The wording of the documents indicates that Hanoi hopes to use the action to spur patriotic and military fervor among its populace. The regime has reported that large protest rallies were held in many DRV cities following the strike.

The North Vietnamese have made no specific threats of retaliation against the US and its allies, and have not claimed that military or other assistance was impending from other bloc nations. In their statements, the North Vietnamese have lumped the US strike with other recent DRV allegations of US bombing and maritime forays against North Vietnam, apparently in an effort to demonstrate that the US is engaged in a deliberate campaign of armed military action against it. The DRV government statement of 5 August, for example, charged that the strike was a preconceived "act of war," directly ordered by President Johnson.

A relatively mild-worded roundup of DRV allegations of recent US military actions against North Vietnam has also been forwarded in a protest note to the International Control Commission in Saigon. The note demands that the Laotian government take measures to stop US "aggression" coming from that quarter.

Soviet Union: A mildly-worded 5 August TASS statement, attacking the recent US actions against North Vietnam, constitutes the most extensive Soviet commentary on the situation in Vietnam. The statement, which seemed calculated to arouse foreign opposition to US policies in Southeast Asia, claimed that the "unjustified" presence of US naval units in the Gulf of Tonkin was nothing less than an "openly hostile act." The TASS statement merely noted that the 4 August US air strikes against North Vietnam were a "violation of DRV airspace." The statement carefully avoided mentioning any specific Soviet response and concluded on the cautious note that "competent Soviet officials" denounced this act of aggression on the part of the US. The statement warned only that "further rash steps or provocations" could convert what are now incidents into some dangerous broad conflict for which the US would bear full responsibility.

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West Europe: The crisis has apparently caught many West European officials on vacation and there has been little official comment thus far. Developments in the Gulf of Tonkin have swept all other stories into second place in most of the European press.

In London, strong support for the American action came from Prime Minister Douglas Home and Foreign Secretary Butler, who backed the right of US warships to defend themselves against "unprovoked aggression" in international waters. The Prime Minister, who cut short his vacation in Scotland and returned to London, was expected to issue an official statement on the situation. The back-America theme ran prominently in both conservative and left-wing dailies and in the Independent press. Only the Communist Daily Worker and the liberal Guardian were in the actively hostile camp. The Guardian, skeptical about US intentions, suggests that many people will be tempted to suspect that American air attacks and the movement of military power into South Asia has long been planned and required only a suitable occasion to set them off. It says US belligerence is likely to give a badly needed shot of popular support to the North Vietnamese regime. John Gollan, general secretary of the British Communist Party, accused the US of an "outrageous act of war." The British public appears generally to support the US action in Vietnam. The only anti-American incident reported was in Glasgow where demonstrators daubed slogans outside the US consulate.

In Paris, government spokesmen have refrained from commenting on any aspect of the crisis, although UN Ambassador Roger Seydoux has officially backed the Soviet call for participation by the North Vietnam regime in Security Council discussions of the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin. President de Gaulle has instructed Foreign Minister Couve de Murville and Ambassador Seydoux to assemble a dossier on the "true facts" of the Tonkin incidents. According to a Foreign Ministry official the government would reserve comment till it heard US Ambassador Stevenson's report to the UN Security Council. The French press have generally interpreted the North Vietnamese attacks on the US warships as an attempt

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by Peiping to split the American-Soviet detente wide open. The gaullist Paris-Jour adopted a told-you-so attitude claiming the incident had to come sooner or later because the US refused to seek a political solution by international negotiation.

Both in Bonn and Berlin, German officials expressed their grave concern over the Vietnamese situation at the same time pledging full support for the US. President Johnson's action in the present crisis received unanimous praise in the West German press which described the Tonkin incident as a deliberate provocation and the US response quiet and proper.

Die Welt paid tribute to the President's fast reaction and said that now the Communists have been warned. Sueddeutsche Zeitung termed the American reaction quiet and sober. Stuttgarter Nachrichten saw the North Vietnamese attack as a deliberate provocation. Frankfurter Allgemeine said that Washington had reacted properly.

In Rome, the Italian Government has not yet taken an official position but Premier Aldo Moro is reported studying the possibility of including a statement affirming Italian solidarity with the US in today's parliamentary debate on his left-of-center government.

In Copenhagen, Foreign Minister Per Haekkerup praised President Johnson's reaction to "North Vietnamese provocations." He also expressed the hope that the incident would bring the powers involved to the conference table.

Reaction from other European capitals and Ottawa was sympathetic and understanding.

Asia-Africa: There are still no reactions from the Middle East and only scattered responses from the African countries. Government officials in Sudan, Nigeria, Nairobi and Dahomey expressed an understanding of the US action, with the latter's Prime Minister observing that the "Chinese Communists obviously are behind all this." South Africa's acting foreign secretary told the US ambassador that there was no question of his nation's full

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support. While the Algerian government has not yet issued an official statement, about 200 Algerian students attempted to demonstrate in front of the US Embassy but were dispersed by the police. The Ghanaian press strongly condemned US "imperialism" in Southeast Asia and observed that the sharp and sudden action by the US cannot fail to incite the participation of the Chinese Peoples Republic.

India's Premier Shastri called an emergency cabinet meeting following the receipt of President Johnson's message and issued a statement expressing grave concern over the development of the incidents which threaten peace in the area.

In the Far East, Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, Malaysia, Thailand, Nationalist China and South Korea have given firm support to the US retaliatory measures. SEATO representatives in Bangkok privately approved the action following a briefing by the US representative yesterday. No official reactions have come from Burma, Cambodia, or Indonesia. However, the leftist press in Cambodia charges the US with provocation and aggression, and Indonesian officials privately display serious concern and dismay at the US action, commenting that "this could be the beginning of the end of American influence in Asia." American authorities in Phnom Penh report indications that Cambodian students may be planning demonstrations against the embassy.

The initial response by the Japanese government was an unofficial expression of "shock" by the foreign ministry at the strong tone of President Johnson's statement, but following further consultations, an official statement was issued indicating the government's understanding that a US response was "inevitable" under the circumstances. Japanese defense leaders assured Prime Minister Ikeda that they did not expect US forces stationed in Japan to be involved. About 100 demonstrators gathered in front of the US embassy with "Yankee Go Home" signs, but were pushed back from the embassy grounds by the police and quickly dispersed.

Latin America: Latin American official commentary has been limited thus far to statements

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sympathetic to the US position by Dominican and Venezuelan authorities. Dominican triumvirate president Donald Reid Cabral told US Embassy officials yesterday that Washington could count on full Dominican support on "anything needed," including support at the UN. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Iribarren Borges reacted to news of the North Vietnamese attack with sympathy and seemed especially impressed to learn that the attack had occurred well within international waters.

Press and radio reactions from several other countries of the hemisphere have struck a common note of apprehension lest the conflict escalate into a more serious crisis. One Panamanian radio station, while expressing understanding of the US reaction to the PT boat attack, was especially fearful over the possible threat to the Panama Canal it felt would be implicit in any substantial worsening of the conflict.

Although no official statement on the Vietnamese situation has yet been issued by the Castro government, Cuban propaganda media have roundly condemned the US for "committing aggression" against North Vietnam. Radio Havana has sought to link yesterday's bombing raid against North Vietnamese targets with earlier charges that Washington had intended all along to carry the conflict to North Vietnamese soil. Finally, Cuban radiobroadcasts have drawn a parallel between the current Vietnamese situation and the outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950, saying that the new Yankee "warlike adventure" will have results that are "still not predicatble."

✧ United Nations: UN diplomats predict that the UN Security Council will invite both North Vietnam and South Vietnam to take part in the forthcoming debate. Security Council President Nielsen of Norway suspended debate yesterday so he could sound out representatives to the 11-nation body on the proposal to hear the two Vietnamese representatives. Nielsen said he believed he could convene the Council again Friday to report results.

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